CONSERVATION GUIDELINES: OBSERVATORY HISTORIC DISTRICT

INTRODUCTION TO GUIDELINES

The Conservation Guidelines outlined in this booklet are intended to assist property owners, architects, and contractors who are considering work within the Observatory Historic District, including changes to existing buildings, demolition, or new construction. The guidelines are not rigid sets of rules, but serve as a guide in making improvements, which are compatible with the district's character. They set broad parameters within which district changes should occur, while maintaining ample opportunity for design creativity and individual choice. The guidelines give the owner and the City's Historic Conservation Board a way to determine whether the proposed work is appropriate to the long-term interests of the district.

When construction or demolition is proposed within the Historic District, a Certificate of Appropriateness (C.O.A.) must be obtained from the Historic Conservation Board (HCB). This is in addition to a building permit, although there is no additional fee. The following kinds of work do not require a C.O.A.:

- Ordinary repair and maintenance which does not result in an exterior change.
- Interior work such as plumbing, wiring, and plastering.

The following points are extremely important:

- The guidelines do not require that an owner make improvements.
- The guidelines do not force an owner to “take the property back to the way it was.”
- The HCB may modify certain guidelines, as appropriate, in cases of economic hardship. The HCB must approve the proposal, even if it doesn’t meet the guidelines, when the owner demonstrates:
    a) that there is no economically feasible and prudent alternative” which would conform to the guidelines, and
    b) that strict application of the guidelines would deny a reasonable rate of return on the property, and would amount to a “taking of the property without just compensation.”
- The guidelines and the legislation which set up the HCB are structured for negotiating solutions which will give the owner substantial benefit without causing substantial harm to the district. The Board may grant approval, set conditions, or waive certain guidelines to aid negotiations.
- Any applicant who disagrees with a Board decision may appeal the decision to City Council.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Historic Conservation Office staff during the planning stages prior to formal application for a building permit. We are available in Suite 700, 805 Central Avenue or at 354-4890.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Two of the primary reasons for the development of Observatory Place and Avery Lane involve the construction of the new Cincinnati Observatory in 1873 and the development of improved transportation systems to the suburbs, which prompted the development of the village of Hyde Park. The patterns of development and the character of the Observatory Historic District were influenced by the construction of the observatory and the development of Hyde Park.

In 1874, John Kilgour initiated his first subdivision near the Observatory, north and south of Observatory Avenue (formerly Hogback Road) in an effort to attract people to this rural area in close proximity to downtown Cincinnati. Within the Observatory Historic District, this subdivision included all the houses along Observatory Place and some land surrounding the Observatory. The first director of the Observatory, Ormond Stone (3300 Observatory Avenue_c.1877-1878), was the first property owner to build a house near the Observatory. Jermain Porter (3441 Observatory Place) was the second director of the Observatory and constructed his house c.1886.

Generally the larger area north and south of Observatory Avenue was known as Mt. Lookout. The area north of Observatory Avenue was also referred to as Mornington, which later became the village of Hyde Park.

The expansion of the Cincinnati and Eastern Railroad from downtown to Mornington in 1882 prompted the major stage of development in the Observatory Historic District. This extension of the train service made the area more accessible to commuters. John Kilgour was then able to promote the area as a desirable suburb to live in with easy access to the city.

In 1892, Charles and John Kilgour formed the "Mornington Syndicate" which was a group of businessmen who pooled approximately $400,000 in an effort to stimulate development of rural Mornington, renamed Hyde Park that same year. Hyde Park was named after the prestigious Hyde Park community in New York, indicating the Mornington Syndicate's desire to attract a higher profile property owner. Developers also set up "restrictions and plans" to keep out undesirable commercial and industrial development. In 1892, well before annexation, Hyde Park received access to the City of Cincinnati's water and gas lines and through the developers' political ties obtained quality roads and streets. The village of Hyde Park was incorporated in 1896, and the area was annexed to the City of Cincinnati in 1903.

Development was further encouraged by Fred W. Cook's subdivision in 1910 which included those properties along Avery Lane. Jermain Porter was one of the first to purchase a parcel from Fred Cook and construct his second house in the area at 3314 Avery Lane.

Observatory Place and Avery Lane are now an exclusively residential neighborhood, with the exception of the Observatory buildings, situated north of Observatory Avenue between Herschel View Avenue on the east and St. Johns Place on the west.

Construction dates for the buildings range from 1873 to 1923. The development of the district can be grouped in three time periods. Initial construction occurred from 1873 to c.1880. Then the major period of construction was just after the expansion of the train commuter service to the area from c.1886 to 1904. Finally the last construction period occurred from c.1910-1923 which follows Hyde Park's annexation in 1903.

The first two houses to be constructed in the district were 3300 Observatory Avenue (c.1877-78) and 3459 Observatory Place (c.1880) which were built near the Observatory at the southwest corner of Observatory Place and Avery Lane.

The second phase of construction relates to the expansion of the Cincinnati and Eastern Railroad and the improvement in roads and utilities. Five of the twelve residential structures were built in this period. They include 3441 Observatory Place (c.1886), 3458 Observatory Place (c.1889), 3435 Observatory Place (c.1891), 3457 Observatory Place (c.1892), and 3450 Observatory Place (c.1895). In addition, the O.M. Mitchell Building was constructed on the Observatory grounds in 1904, with an addition c.1912.

The final period of construction which dates after the annexation occurred from 1910, the date of Fred W. Cook's subdivision, to 1923. Construction from this period focused primarily on Avery Lane, and included 3328 Avery (c. 1911), 3326 Avery (c. 1912), 3314 Avery (1912), 3290 Observatory Avenue (c.1915), and the newest house in the Observatory Historic District, 3445 Observatory Place, built c. 1923.
Over the years there has been minimal change to the character of the district. A few older garages have been torn down and some newer garages built. What few alterations or additions have occurred were constructed in a compatible manner on rear elevations and have little or no visibility from the public right of way. There has been no major new construction or demolition since c.1923. Only a small portion of the undeveloped Observatory land along Erie Avenue has had a change in use when it was converted to a park for the City of Cincinnati containing a playground and tennis courts. It also appears as though the intent of the Kilgour covenants on some of the properties has been respected throughout the community. As the "Mornington Syndicate" intended, this area of Hyde Park is still a fashionable residential neighborhood today.

Along with the wide range of construction dates there are also a variety of architectural styles evident throughout the district, yet the area still maintains an overall visual cohesiveness. The district's unified character is defined by its similarity of building height and scale, use of materials, setbacks, building placement on the lots and lot size, and the open space.

The buildings are generally single-family residences irregular in shape with porches and bays off of side and rear elevations. They are usually 1- to 2-stories in height and built of frame, with wood clapboard and stucco the most common siding materials. Roofs are generally visible and irregular in shape throughout the district. The most common materials for roofs are either multi-color slates or asphalt shingles.

More specifically, some of the prevalent architectural elements throughout the district include original wood multi-paned windows (3450, 3441, 3445 Observatory Place and 3328 Avery Lane), gabled roofs covered in multi-colored slate and trimmed with intricate roof cresting (3300 Observatory Avenue and 3458 Observatory Place), original wood porches with decorative railing and post details (3435 Observatory Place, 3300 Observatory Avenue, 3458 and 3441 Observatory Place), decorative wood shingles (3441 and 3450 Observatory Place and 3328 Avery Lane), decorative brick chimneys and original one and a half story garages setback behind the main house. In many cases, the garages have been designed to be an extension of the house in its design and detailing and are important to the overall character of the district.

The houses are built on medium-sized lots and are setback similar distances from the street. The buildings are oriented towards the street. Properties are well maintained with mature trees and modest landscaping. The majority of the lots in the district flow from one property to another with the exception of one vacant lot shielded by a wood stockade fence. In most cases the few fences that do exist in the district do not intrude into the front yards of individual lots. There are also a couple of stone retaining walls in the district at 3300 Observatory Avenue and at 3314 Avery Lane which add to the character of the district. Every house with the exception of 3326 Avery Lane has a driveway leading from the front to the rear, generally along the side of the property. The paving materials used for the driveways include gravel or concrete. Asphalt is not a common paving surface for driveways in the district.

Although there are some obvious architectural styles evident in the district, generally the houses are more Eclectic, using elements from several styles, rather than one well defined architectural style. During the major period of construction the stylistic influences varied from house to house. Those styles which influenced design included Italianate, Queen Anne, Eastlake, Shingle and Colonial Revival. Later styles which are prevalent particularly along Avery Lane include Dutch Colonial, Bungalow, and Tudor Revival.

The earliest building in the district is the Observatory Building (1873) designed by Samuel Hannaford in the Renaissance Revival style. Significant architectural features include stone fluted columns, large rectangular wooden doors, 6/6 double hung wood windows, an iron balustrade along the roof, dominant side chimneys, decorative frieze and cornice treatment and a large ribbed metal dome painted silver.

The other Observatory building, the O.M. Mitchell Building, was constructed in 1904 with an addition which dates to c.1912. This building was designed in the Classical Revival style by the firm of Samuel Hannaford and Sons and displays stone details in the portico, door surround and in the window details. The building also exhibits a decorative parapet and both a large and a small dome shaped turret. Each of the

Observatory buildings are located along a circular drive. The buildings are situated perpendicular to one another several yards apart.

The house at 3300 Observatory Avenue is designed in the Second Empire style featuring a mansard roof with a centrally located tower on the south facade, and intricate roof cresting. Another distinctive house is 3458 Observatory Place situated on the southeast corner of Avery Lane. This house features some Italianate and Gothic Revival elements including the decorative bargeboard in the gable and intricate porch details on the west facade. 3435 Observatory Place is a Queen Anne style cottage with decorative Eastlake detailing in the gable and porch decorations. Some of the Colonial Revival homes such as 3450 and 3459 Observatory Place feature an entrance framed with sidelights and surmounted by an elliptical fanlight. Windows are large, often with multiple panes, and generally stacked vertically. Cornice lines are evident but modest in their detailing. Chimneys are important features in the overall composition of the buildings.

There is only one Tudor Revival house (with Craftsman and Bungalow influences) in the district at 3314 Avery Lane. In addition, there is one Tudor styled house in the district which features a stone first floor and stucco on the upper floors. The entrance features a stone Tudor-arched opening with a large wooden door. As is typical, many of the windows are multiple paned and vary in size and placement. The Dutch Colonial house at 3328 Avery Lane features a cross-gambrel roof and wood cladding. This particular style of Dutch Colonial was popular in the mid-west between 1905-1915.

The several acres of land surrounding the Observatory have always been open undeveloped land, which is essential to the successful operation of the Observatory. An extreme air pollution problem caused by dense development and industry in the basin area caused the relocation of the Observatory from Mt. Adams to the clean air of Mt. Lookout in 1873. Development of the land increases the chances of light glare and pollution, limiting the operation of the Observatory. Representatives of the Observatory have found that preserving the existing mature trees and planting additional trees whenever possible increases the thermal stability of the air, enhancing the operation of the Observatory. Furthermore, this open green space which features several mature trees and minimal landscaping has always been an aesthetic feature of the neighborhood, creating a spacious, park like setting at the end of Observatory Place.

There are no non-contributing buildings in this district.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1) Avoid removing or altering historic material or distinctive architectural features: if it's original and in good shape, try to keep it.

2) Repair rather than replace whenever possible. If replacing, replicate the original based on existing materials. Do not invent something that "might have been."

3) When extensive replacement of missing or severely deteriorated materials is necessary and replication to exactly match the original is not feasible, the new work should match the general character of the original in terms of scale, texture, design and composition.

4) Don't try to make the building look older than it really is. Rehabilitation work should fit the character of the original building. If your building has been substantially altered, nearby buildings of similar age and style may indicate what its original character was.

5) Your building may contain clues to guide you during rehabilitation. Original detailing may be covered up with other, later materials, or there may be physical evidence of what original work was like and where it was located.

6) If no evidence of original materials or detailing exists, alterations should be detailed in a simple manner and contemporary in design, yet fit the character of the building.

7) A later addition to an old building or a non-original facade may have gained significance on its own. It may be significant as a good example of its style or as evidence of changing needs and tastes. Don't assume it's historically worthless just because it's not part of the original building.

8) Original openings should not be altered. Enlarging or reducing the size of an opening can dramatically change the character of the building.
9) Surface cleaning should be done by the gentlest means possible. Never sandblast or use other abrasive methods. Cleaning or paint removal may not be necessary at all.

10) Original building materials and architectural detailing should not be covered by other materials.

BUILDING REHABILITATION AND ALTERATION

1) **MATERIALS: SHOULD MATCH THE ORIGINAL AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE**

Most contributing buildings in the district are made of wood or brick, often with wood or stone details. Missing or deteriorated materials should be replaced with recycled or new materials which match the original as closely as possible with regard to the following: type, color, style, shape, and texture of materials, composition, type of joint, size of units, placement and detailing. Imitation or synthetic materials, such as aluminum or vinyl siding, imitation brick or stone, or plastic, are generally inappropriate.

2) **DOORS AND WINDOWS: KEEP THE "EYES" OF THE BUILDING OPEN**

Possibly the most important features of any building are its openings: its doors and windows. The size and location of openings are an essential part of the overall design and an important element in the architectural styling. Original openings should not be altered. Original doors and window sashes should be repaired rather than replaced, whenever possible. When replacement is necessary, the new door or window should match the original in size and style as closely as possible. Metal or plastic window frames are generally unacceptable unless they are anodized or painted. Screens and storm windows should be as inconspicuous as possible. Raw metal combination storm windows or doors are not appropriate. Original openings should not be filled in, especially on the front of buildings. If original openings are filled in the outline of the opening should remain apparent by setting the new infill material back from the existing wall plane and by leaving the sills and lintels in place.

3) **ROOF: MAINTAIN THE ROOFLINE**

The existing roofline and architectural features which give the building its character, such as domes, roof shapes, dormers, cornices, brackets, and chimneys, should be preserved. The addition of features, such as vents, skylights, decks, and roof- top utilities, should be avoided or should be inconspicuously placed and screened where necessary. Slate roofs are common within the district and should be maintained whenever possible. On roofs visible from public areas, slate or asphalt shingles, colored to match the original, are acceptable replacement materials. Generally, wood shingles, roll roofing, built-up tar and gravel, plastic, or fiberglass roofing materials are inappropriate although there may be exceptions to this rule. On flat or low-pitched roofs that are not visible from public areas, other roof materials may be considered.

4) **ORNAMENTATION: RETAIN DISTINCTIVE DETAILING**

Significant architectural features such as window hoods, stone, tin and wood cornices and brackets, decorative piers, quoins, bay windows, Palladian windows, door surrounds, porches and other ornamental elements should be preserved. These distinctive features help identify and distinguish the buildings within the Observatory Historic District.

5) **OUTSIDE ATTACHMENTS: AVOID OUT-OF-CHARACTER FEATURES**

The addition of out-of-character features should be avoided. If shutters are appropriate, they should be the right size and should shut, meeting in the middle of the window and covering the whole window. Other outside attachments to the house, such as light fixtures, should be compatible. The use of bright outdoor lights such as flood lights can interfere with the astronomical observations at the Observatory and should be avoided. In general, the "colonial" light fixture should be avoided; something simple and modern is usually more appropriate.

6) **UTILITY SYSTEM INSTALLATION: PLACE THEM INCONSPICUOUSLY**

The installation of utility and mechanical systems, such as water or gas meters, antennas, and central air conditioning units should be inconspicuously placed, avoiding installation on the street facade whenever possible. Antennas, including television reception antennas and satellite dishes, should be located where they are not visible on the front facade. Mechanical equipment on the ground should be screened with a fence or plant materials or housed in a structure that is in harmony with the surroundings. Mechanical equipment attached to the side or roof of a building should be kept as low as possible and covered or painted to blend with the background. Wall or window air conditioning units on the street facade should be avoided whenever possible.

7) **CLEANING: NEVER SANDBLAST**

The cleaning of existing material should be done by the gentlest method possible. For masonry structures, begin with scraping by hand or scrubbing with a bristle brush and mild detergent. Chemical cleaning is effective, but must be followed immediately by a neutralizing acid wash. If chemical cleaning is used, test cleaning patches should be carried out in inconspicuous places to ensure that appropriate results are obtained. In any case, sandblasting and other abrasive cleaning methods are not acceptable. Sandblasting destroys the surface of the brick and stone and shortens the life of the building. Wire brushes can also damage the masonry surface, and their use is also not acceptable.

8) **REPOINTING MASONRY: USE THE PROPER MORTAR AND JOINT**

The mortar joints (spaces between the bricks) found in masonry construction deteriorate for a variety of reasons. Repointing these joints can significantly aid the rehabilitation of a structure. Generally, buildings built prior to 1900 used a lime-based mortar. This mortar is much softer than the portland cement-based mortar of today. If a hard, modern mortar is used softer bricks may crack or break during the freeze/thaw cycle. When repointing an existing wall, use a mortar mix that is high in lime content and try to match the color and consistency of the sand as closely as possible, and match the type and thickness of the joint. All of the masonry buildings in the district are not painted. This leaves the mortar exposed and visually more important, emphasizing the need for care in choosing the right color. (The City's Historic Conservation Office can suggest an appropriate mortar mixture.)

9) **WATER-REPELLENT COATINGS: AVOID IF POSSIBLE**

Most historic structures have survived without the need of water-repellent coatings. Water-related damage on the interior of buildings is usually a result of a failing roof, deteriorated or faulty gutters and downspouts, deteriorated mortar, rising damp, or condensation. Water-repellent coatings will not solve these problems and may even accelerate them. Waterproof and water-repellent coatings should never be used unless there is actual water penetration through the masonry. In this case, only the affected area should be treated and only after it has thoroughly dried out.

10) **PAINTING: IF IT IS APPROPRIATE**

Two of the three brick buildings in the district were built after 1890 and use a hard-faced material which does not require paint for protection. The aesthetic character of unpainted brick from this time period is important to the building's design intent. Buildings with brick from this period should not be painted. The brick on the Observatory Building appears to have never been painted and should remain so.

Although the HCB does not review paint color, some general guidelines for painting any building apply. Paint colors should be compatible with the district and appropriate for the style of the particular building. The color selected for the body of the building should contrast with the color chosen for the structure's decorative elements.

11) **SIDING: TRY REPLACEMENT WITH WOOD FIRST**

Wood clapboard and shingle siding should be used as the repair or replacement material where appropriate, and its use is encouraged as a resurfacing material on wood frame buildings. The use of aluminum or vinyl siding for resurfacing should be avoided; however, in cases where they are used, the exposed width of such siding should not exceed four inches. Artificial stone, asbestos, asphalt shingles, and other similar resurfacing materials shall not be used. Architectural features such as cornices, brackets, window sills, and lintels should not be removed or obscured when resurfacing material is applied. All wood siding should be painted. Wood or aluminum siding should never be applied to brick or stone walls for resurfacing.

12) **STUCCO: MAINTAIN WHERE APPROPRIATE**

Stucco is somewhat common in the district and can be found on Queen Anne and Tudor Revival style structures. Stucco is essentially lime, portland cement, sand and a coarse aggregate such as hair or fiber. The major enemy of stucco is water. Deterioration in stucco is usually the result of rain, water vapor from inside the building, capillary action from the ground or poor gutter or downspouts. Stucco is a major material on some of the buildings and should be maintained whenever possible. Minor cracks or damaged areas should be repaired by removing loose material and patching with new stucco which matches the existing in composition and texture. In areas where there has been extensive damage, investigate the source of the damage. New downspouts, flashing, or proper vapor barrier may be necessary to prevent future problems.

ADDITIONS

1) **COMPATIBILITY: CONSIDER THE ADDITION AS NEW CONSTRUCTION**

In general, additions should follow the guidelines for new construction in terms of materials, form, scale, height, detailing and siting. (See the New Construction section of this booklet for specific guidelines.)

2) **DESIGN: RESPOND TO THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDING**

The design of an addition should respond specifically to the architecture of the original building. While the addition should be sympathetic to and compatible with the existing building, it should not try to duplicate its style or appear to have been built at the same time as the original building. The design should also respond, in a more general way, to adjacent buildings.

3) **IDENTITY: DO NOT OVERPOWER THE EXISTING BUILDING**

If the original building is architecturally or historically significant, the addition should take a respectful "back seat" to it and not overpower the original. An addition may be taller than the original building if site considerations and careful design still allow the older building to remain dominant.

4) **CONNECTIONS: KEEP THEM SIMPLE**

The connection of the addition to the original building should be designed so that it does not detract from either structure. Significant architectural features of the original building should not be destroyed, removed, or obscured by the addition.

NEW CONSTRUCTION

The general aim of the guidelines for new construction is to encourage compatibility with (but not replication of) the character and quality found in the 19th and early 20th century buildings found in the district.

The language of the guidelines, therefore, is keyed to the district's contributing buildings. In all cases, the compatibility of the proposed structure with its natural and built environment will be considered in review, as will the following:

1) **MATERIALS: USE NATURAL MATERIALS WHEN POSSIBLE**

Materials should be of similar color, texture, and scale to building materials found in the district's contributing buildings. Most contributing buildings in the district are made of wood, often with wood details, although brick structures with stone details also exist. The use of natural appearing materials is preferred. Materials that are synthetic in appearance or that are highly reflective are generally inappropriate.

2) **SCALE AND MASSING: MATCH THE DISTRICT**

The contributing buildings within the district are generally small to medium-sized residential and institutional structures situated on medium-sized lots. The scale and massing of a new building and its individual elements (i.e., windows, doors, roof, ornamentation) should be compatible with the forms found among the contributing buildings. The ratio of wall surface to openings, and the ratio of width and height of windows and doors, should be consistent with the district's contributing buildings. Glass curtain walls along the front facade should be avoided, and large, flat walls which are unbroken by openings or setbacks on the front facade also are discouraged.

3) **HEIGHT: CONSIDER THE SURROUNDINGS**

The height of new construction should not significantly differ from the height of nearby contributing buildings in the district. Generally, new buildings should not exceed the height of the tallest abutting building by more than one story. The contours of the building site may further restrict the height of the new building or may permit the construction of a larger building.

4) **DETAILING: AVOID THE CONSTRUCTION OF FEATURELESS BOXES**

The detailing of new buildings should respond to detailing found on contributing buildings within the district. This should generally include the following:

- A cornice or other form of definition at the roof line.
- Distinctive detailing at the front door.
- Window sills and lintels and/or distinctive detailing at openings.
- Ornamental features such as banding, distinctive corner treatment, interior cornice and other decorative elements.
- When applicable, as in institutional buildings, a base at the ground floor or lower levels, employing a change of material or change of color and proportions from upper floors.

5) **SITING: STAY IN LINE WITH THE NEIGHBORING BUILDINGS**

New structures should be sited with setbacks similar to those of adjacent buildings and should be sited to respect current topographic and neighborhood development patterns. Where applicable, they should be located to respect views and hillside constraints. Site improvements and changes should comply with the guidelines for site improvements and alterations. (Refer to the Site Improvements and Alterations section of this Booklet for applicable guidelines.)

6) **SUBDIVISION: SHOULD REFLECT EXISTING PATTERNS**

Application for approval of subdivision plats or the cut-up of existing lots within the Observatory Historic District shall be reviewed by the Historic Conservation Board for their compatibility within the district. The Board shall consider the existing development patterns, lot size, frontage, land use and underlying zoning. The Board shall make its recommendation to the City Planning Commission for a final decision.

DEMOLITIONS

The demolition of existing buildings shall not be permitted unless one of the following conditions exist:

1) Demolition has been ordered by the Director of Buildings and Inspections for public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition which constitutes an emergency.

2) The owner can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Historic Conservation Board that the structure cannot be reused nor can a reasonable economic return be gained from the use of all or part of the building proposed for demolition.

3) The owner is a non-profit corporation or organization and can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Historic Conservation Board that the denial of the application to demolish would also deny the owner the use of the property in a manner compatible with its organizational purposes and would amount to a taking of the owner's property without just compensation.

4) The demolition request is for an inappropriate addition or a non-significant portion of a building and the demolition will not adversely affect those parts of the building which are significant as determined by the HCB.

5) The demolition request is for a non-contributing building and the demolition will not adversely affect the character of the district.

SITE IMPROVEMENTS AND ALTERATIONS

1) SIGNS: AVOID CLUTTER

Generally, signs should be designed for clarity, legibility, and compatibility with structures on the site and in the district. Their design should be simple and contemporary. It is generally inappropriate to attach signs to buildings which were originally private homes, although small identification signs may be acceptable. Free-standing signs are permitted, but should not be sized or located in such a way as to obstruct views of the district's contributing buildings. Billboards and roof-top signs are not permitted, and internally-illuminated signs are strongly discouraged. Wood, metal, and fabric signs are encouraged; plastic and other synthetic materials are inappropriate.

2) WALLS AND FENCES: AVOID THE FRONT YARD

In a few cases properties do feature retaining walls which do help define the character of the district. In general privacy and wrought iron fences are not characteristic of the district. This is particularly true of the front yards which flow from property to property accentuating the open, almost park-like atmosphere. If substantial walls and fences did exist in the front yards they would obstruct vistas and interrupt the spacious character of the district. In some areas low walls or hedges may be used to define the separation between public and private property. Privacy fences are sometimes used in rear or side yards but any new fences should be held behind the front edge of the principal building on the site. Fences and walls exceeding 36" should not be built in the front yard of any property in the district.

3) PARKING AND PAVING: LIMIT THE COVERAGE

As noted above, this district is characterized by open space and landscaping. Reducing green space by adding additional pavement for driveways or parking areas should be limited whenever possible. New driveways and parking areas should respect existing contours and natural features. Parking lots should be sufficiently screened to minimize the view of parked cars. Screening can incorporate landscaping, decorative fencing and berms and should be of a design compatible with the surrounding buildings and landscape elements. Lots with space for ten or more cars should be planted with shade trees in order to soften the visual impact of the lots on the neighborhood. In these cases, trees should be placed around the perimeter of the lots and in planting islands within the lots.

4) **LANDSCAPING: SIMPLE AND CONTEMPORARY**

Landscaping, special lighting, seating, and decorative paving are encouraged as part of rehabilitation and new construction projects. The design of these features should be simple and contemporary. Antiques or historic reproductions are not generally encouraged. Mature trees should be retained, as should other significant features such as steps, retaining walls, walks, and fences which contribute to a property's character. Permits for excavation and fill will be reviewed for their impact on the individual property and the character of the district as a whole.

NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

Buildings which do not contribute to the distinctive character of the district were generally constructed after most of the rest of the district was built. They are of a different character than the contributing buildings due to their age and the difference in their scale, material, and detailing. In the Observatory Historic District there are no non-contributing buildings.